

On the staff list, the strange name of Asano Takumi can be seen. This is the pen name of Asano Megumi. Sekiya Ieji, the narrator, had been an NHK announcer, and after the war worked for many years on a Christian program, *Rūteru awaa* (*The Lutheran Hour*) on public broadcasting, and became endeared to children in Japan with his "*Sekiya no ojisan*." Such an image gap is rather interesting.

— Komatsuzawa Hajime

Let's Have a Drink

U.S.A. Production: Office of War Information and Army Air Forces, Distribution: War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, Print: 35mm, sd., English, b&w, 2 min., 1945.

Read between the lines, *Let's Have a Drink* is a call to genocide. Made in the final days of the war as a theatrical trailer, it celebrated the surrender of Germany while warning Americans that the war wasn't over yet. Simply put, it's the biography of a corpse. It begins by displaying a dead Japanese man lying on a ravaged battlefield. Then the film begins a mini-narrative, flashing back over scenes from his life beginning with childhood, continuing with his participation in the Nanking Massacre, and ending with the moment he's shot by American troops on a Pacific Island. The film's finale uses Japanese propaganda footage of thousands of marching troops to point out that "there are still 4,000,000 Japanese soldiers left alive." The two-minute short ends with the sure command, "Get the Jap and get it over!"

This last phrase deserves close attention. More than most representations of the Japanese, "Jap" reveals a crucial attitude of Americans toward their enemy to the East. The Japanese, as Americans frequently claimed, were barbaric and uncivilized *by nature*. Americans' search for new "others" in the immediate post-Cold War period has focused renewed attention on Japan. While many of the issues around which tensions pivot could be directed at any number of our trading partners, Japanese' racial difference and our violent WWII confrontation has singled out Japan. In the context of what has been occasionally (and unproductively) called our "Trade War" with Japan, I have been shocked to hear "Jap" used occasionally by Americans. While today's stereotypes of Japan are not necessarily racist, they are similar to wartime stereotypes to the extent that they exclude plurality. Our descriptions of Japan rarely stray from the worn clichés of traditional art and postmodern super cities — the dance of the kabuki actor and salaryman. In reality, Japan is a raucous mix of fishing, farming, industrial, commercial, rural and urban cultures. Every region features different food, arts, language, and all manner of regional pride (try telling anyone from Kansai that Tokyo and Osaka are basically the same). Americans rarely see this wealth of difference, even when they travel there, as tourists rarely stray from Kansai and *Kantō*. Our images of Japan have grown with the times, but they are as monolithic as ever. These representations can make a dangerous difference, as we saw in the Pacific War.

The monolithic term "The Jap" allows for no difference and plurality; it condemns the entire race. Unlike the war in Europe, no distinction was made between the enemy government in Japan and its people. "Nazis" left room for the possibility of "good Germans," but as the popular phrase of the war put it, the only good "Jap"

was a dead one. By the end of the war attacking "The Jap" enemy meant attacking the military *and* civilians.

Although the U.S. vehemently condemned the bombing of China's civilians by the Japanese military (in films as late as *The Battle of China* (1944) and *Justice* (1945)), the American government was preparing new technology for this very same practice. Both the incendiary bomb and the atomic bomb were designed for the hateful slaughter of civilians. Most Americans have forgotten the first large-scale test of the incendiary bomb on Tokyo's *shitamachi* on 9 March 1945. Home to upwards of a million people in an area four miles by three, it was the most populated place on earth. With only 2,000 tons of payload, the Army Air Force made them all homeless within hours. Between 70,000 and 140,000 people died, making it comparable to the un-"conventional" attacks on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.¹ Young Americans do not know that by the end of the war most other urban populations met the same fate, nor do they know that the last raid over Tokyo (though it already lay in ruins) involved 1,014 planes. Staged as a "finale" to the war, the raid occurred two days after Nagasaki and only hours before the end of the war. Some planes did not touch earth before Truman announced Japan's complete surrender.² To put a human face on these vast numbers, I might tell you about my mother-in-law, who was in her 20s during the war. She came from a fairly wealthy family, and lived in a beautiful, large home in Tokushima. A month before the end of the war — on the Fourth of July — American planes appeared in the sky, and when they disappeared 70% of the city was rubble. Their house, with its generations of *kimono* and furniture, was completely destroyed. She fled the burning city, carrying her mother on her back, and was lucky to survive the attack.

These atrocities against civilians were made possible in part by the lack of distinction between Japanese people and their government. Popular culture, and its documents such as *Justice* and *Let's Have a Drink*, constantly reinforced these attitudes through image and word. The fact that the killing of Iraqi civilians was considered a crime against humanity during the Gulf War can be partly attributed to the comparison of Hussein to Hitler. Politicians and journalists alike were careful to separate an evil Hussein and the unfortunate populace that happened to live under him.

When the Gulf War allies officially apologized for the civilian casualties shown on world-wide television, the famous Japanese cartoon *Fujisantarō* featured a Japanese grandmother watching CNN and wondering what happened to their apology for the targeting of civilians in her youth. *Let's Have a Drink* affords a glimpse at the prevalent exterminationist attitudes that made the dropping of the atomic bomb the logical extension of the policy of bombing civilians.

NOTES

1. Calvoressi, Peter, Guy Wint, and John Pritchard. *Total War: The Causes and Course of the Second World War*, (New York: Pantheon, 1989), 1175-1176.
2. Dower, John W. *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 301.